Senate Creates Panel to Probe CIA, FBI Roles

By Spencer Rich 1/28/75
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A comprehensive investigation of alleged illegal spying on civilians and related abuses of power by the Central Intelligence Agency, FBI and other government agencies was authorized by a 82-to-4 vote of the Senate yesterday.

The vote created an 11-member committee with a $750,000 budget to undertake the probe, and majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) immediately named Frank Church (D-Idaho), Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.), Walter Huddleston (D-Ky.) and freshman Robert Morgan (D-N.C.) and Gary Hart (D-Colo.) as the six Democratic members.

Church is expected to be chosen chairman when the Democratic members meet today to begin organizing. Hart of Michigan told newsmen that he would nominate Church, a senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee who has won plaudits for his handling of the subcommittee investigating multinational corporations.

The GOP members, named by Minority Leader Hugh Scott (Pa.), are John Tower (Texas), who is expected to be selected vice chairman by the Republicans on the committee, Barry M. Goldwater (Ariz.), Howard H. Baker (Tenn.), Richard S. Schweiker (Pa.), and Maryland's Charles McC. Mathias Jr., who has long pressed for an investigation of the type authorized yesterday.

Creation of the select committee, which will have full subpoena powers and authority from the Senate to obtain all records and documents it wishes, was spurred by newspaper reports that the CIA had been spying on civilians in the United States although its charter is limited to work overseas, that the FBI had collected derogatory information on members of Congress, and that the rooms of some delegates to the 1964 Democratic National Convention had been "bugged" by government eavesdroppers.

The composition of the committee seems to assure that the investigation won't end up a whitewash, as some had feared. Although Tower and Goldwater have always been considered close friends of the defense and national security establishment, a majority of the 11 members have been highly critical of

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the security apparatus at one time or another.

Baker hinted in a floor speech that he might want to hear from former President Nixon. "I think one of the major undertakings of the committee ought to be to call up the last surviving President to determine if the President of the United States knows what is going on," Baker said.

On the other side of Capitol Hill, the House has been considering creating a special or select committee of its own to undertake a similar investigation, but hasn't yet taken action.

Mansfield, before announcing the names of the six Democratic members, told the Senate, "There can be no whitewash in this inquiry nor is there room for a vendetta" against the CIA or FBI. He said he wants "no Roman circus or television spectacular." As it became clear on the floor that the resolution would pass overwhelmingly, Mansfield scribbled the names of the six Democrats, which he had refused to disclose earlier, then announced them as the vote ended.

Church, in an interview after the vote, said, "I think every effort should be made to avoid leaks," adding, "I would not see this inquiry as any type of television extravaganza. It's much too serious to be a sideshow."

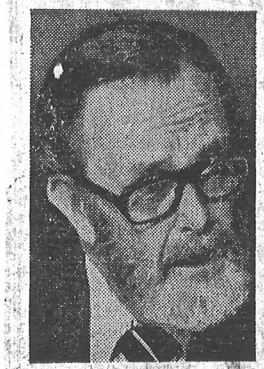
Church said the keynotes should be to "safeguard the legitimate security interests of the country" while uncovering abuses of power and finding ways to forestall future abuses "lest we slip into the practices of a police state." He added, "I see no threat to the CIA, only an effort to see whether agencies are adhering strictly to the law."

During his probe of multinational corporations, he said, "I myself was a critic of the involvement of CIA in Chile, because it seemed to me we had no business interfering with a government that had been freely elected in Chile."

Sen. John Pastore (D-R.I.), who guided the resolution creating the committee to floor passage yesterday, told the Senate "The FBI, and CIA, military intelligence are absolutely necessary to the security and survival of this great country" and there isn't any intention "to disrupt or to injure these fine agencies," only to root out abuses. "There have been some very serious abuses," he added.

In creating the select committee, the Senate in effect made clear that it didn't want old-line pro-military committees like Armed Services and Appropriations to handle the investigation. Armed Services Chairman John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) indicated several occasions that he felt rebuffed and angry, but he voted in favor yesterday after obtaining approval of a floor amendment requiring the new committee to establish written rules to prevent leaks of intelligence.

Tower won voice vote approval of an amendment requiring security clearances for committee employees having access to classified information, but only after Pastore, in a colloquy with Alan Cranston



PHILIP A. HART

WALTER HUDDLESTON

GARY HART

FRANK CHURCH

WALTER F. MONDALE

ROBERT MORGAN

(D-Calif.) and Mansfield, made clear that the committee, and not the executive branch, will decide whether an employe receives a clearance.

The Senate investigation will cover the CIA, FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency, Army, Navy and Air Force intelligence, Secret Service, Treasury, Justice Department, State Department and a half dozen other intelligence-gathering units "any agency" carrying on intelligence functions.

Church, sometimes mentioned as a presidential hopeful, told reporters, "I certainly don't intend to mix my activities on this committee with any type of presidential campaign."

The four senators who voted against creating the committee yesterday were William L. Scott (R-Va.), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), Herman Talmadge (D-Ga.) and Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).